

## DEMAND OF RURAL TOURISM SERVICES. CASE OF TARNAVA MARE AREA, ROMANIA

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### *Abstract*

*This paper presents the results of a research conducted in Tarnava Mare Area during August 2010 and April 2011. Based on collected data it was established the profile of tourist regarding the main categories of services they are asking for during their stay in this region. Another important aspect in order to adept the supply to tourists' needs that was analyzed is represented by the amount the money they are willing to spend on holiday in rural region.*

**Key words:** *travel budget, accommodation facilities, rural tourism*

### **Introduction**

During the last years rural tourism encountered an increase at national level in Romania. Arion and Muresan (2007) reviled the fact that the supply of rural tourism services is more and more diversified in Romania, and the average length of stay for this kind of tourism is around 2 days (Arion and Muresan, 2008). Having all this in consideration, this paper represents the first step in establishing the preferences of tourists regarding the services they want to access during the stay and budget for the trip.

Knowing the tourists preferences and the main services access during their stay in rural areas represents the first steps in order to adapt the supply to demand and provide better quality services. Providing quality services assures competitive advantage, more incomes, and higher rate of profit and in the end tourists' recognition.

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## Material and methods

This research was conducted in Tarnava Mare Area, a rural tourist destination of Romania. The area is spread on the surface of three Counties: Mures, Brasov and Sibiu and eight communes: Saschiz, Albesti, Apold, Vanatori, Danes, Laslea, Bunesti, Biertan. Tarnava Mare is known as a Saxons' area with specific attraction, from which must known are the fortified churches and the biodiversity of the landscape.

The research was conducted during August 2010 and April 2011. The method used the survey and the instrument of the research was the questionnaire. The interview population was represented by the visitors of the region. For the purpose of the research 412 questionnaires was filled up.

Tourist supply from Tranava Mare Area is very varied, from basic services such as accommodation, food and beverages and transport to complementary services such as: guide, visits to local artisans and manufactures, taste of local produces and the list is still open. All these services are available to visitors in order to meet the needs that led the travel.

In order to analyze the collected date SPSS var. 17 was used. For testing different hypothesis the Hi-square test and Pearson's contingency coefficient were used.

$$\chi_c^2 = \sum_i \sum_j \frac{(n_{ij} - n_{ij}^*)^2}{n_{ij}^*}$$

Where:

$n_{ij}$  – observed frequencies

$n_{ij}^*$  – expected frequencies

If  $\chi_c^2 > \chi_{0,05;g}^2$ , then it can be appreciated that between the two variables exist a link. In order to establish the intensity of the link the Pearson's contingency coefficient was calculated base on the below formula (Merce *et. al.*, 2010):

$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi_c^2}{n + \chi_c^2}}$$

Where:

$n$  – volume of the sample

## Results and discussions

From all the respondents 71.84 per cent used the accommodation services while 75.24 per cent used the food and beverages services from the research area. The difference from those which used the food and beverages services and those that used the accommodation facilities is represented by tourists that were just passing by the region and those who were visiting friends and relatives and did not need accommodation services in the guesthouses.

From all of the visitors which benefited from food and beverages services only 38 persons tasted local produces. This may be due to the fact that visitors are not sufficient informed or the marketing effort is not enough in this way, in promoting this kind of products and gastronomic tourism.

The number of those who have used the services of the guide is relatively low, 6.07 per cent, although these services can be provided on request by different bodies operating in the area or the owners of guesthouses. This can be explained by explorative nature of tourists, by the existence of tourist information centre, where are distributed informational materials and relatively high price of such shares (50-80 Euro / day according to data provided by ADEPT Foundation and guesthouses owners).

Visiting farms to familiarize with the process of obtaining various local products (cheese, honey, etc..) does not represents a point of attraction for tourists, although this kind of tourist activities are included in tourism promotion programs, and in some cases owners of guesthouses have also farms where those interested have the opportunity to pursue the process of cheese production, tasting it and also buy it.

Looking at the services they received in the tourist destination, by category of tourists was noted that the largest share is held by the two basic categories, namely accommodation and catering.

From the total number of Romanian visitors 79.77 percent enjoyed food and beverages services, about 5 percent less than the Italian tourists, but with 14 percent more than German tourists. Guide services were accessed mainly by foreign tourists (Italians and other nationalities). Visiting the beekeepers represented an attraction mainly to Italians, 7.69 percent of them carrying out this activity in the tourist destination, followed by Romanian tourists (6.94 percent). Other specified activities to be undertaken by tourists in the area were mentioned: picking flowers, mushrooms, visit craftsmen etc.

As it can be observed in Table 1 out of the 296 tourists who have received accommodation services around 25 percent consider the price of accommodation affordable, while 17.57 percent consider it very high. Regarding food and beverages service can say that tourists point of view is divided in extreme, 23.18 percent of respondents consider it very high, while 24.57 percent of them consider the price very low. This distribution is to due to the differences in income of tourists on the one hand and on the fact that these services were provided by different guesthouses and restaurants, on the other hand.

**Table 1: Price distribution on services categories**

No.	Price Services	Very high %	High %	Not high Not low %	Low %	Very low %	Don't know %	Total %
1.	Accommodation	17.57	18.24	24.32	21.96	17.91	0.00	100
2.	Food and beverage	23.18	16.61	16.26	19.38	24.57	0.00	100
3.	Guide	0.00	16.67	33.33	16.67	33.33	0.00	100
4.	Taste of local products	50.00	33.33	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	100
5.	Others	30.77	15.38	0.00	15.38	38.46	0.00	100

From 71.84 percent (296 tourists) of the tourists who were accommodated in guesthouses from the research area, 97.64 percent (289 tourists) were dining in the establishment who stayed, 2.03 percent received guide and taste local products while 4.4 percent accessed other services such as visiting craftsmen, transport station, bike rental.

Half of those who have tasted local products consider the price for this kind of services high. Analyzing the maximum amount available to be spent during the stay, it was observed that, on average, a tourist from Tarnava Mare Area is willing to spend 235.15 Euro, with a minimum of 20 Euro for tourists who are just passing by and do not access any category of services, and a maximum of 1630 Euro. German tourists are willing to spend on average 287.42 Euro, the Italians 292.69 Euro and the Romanian tourists on average are willing to spend 133.50 Euro, with variations between 20 Euro and 330 Euro. On this average budget are also included the transport expenses.

Accommodation costs vary between 0 percent and 55.44 percent out of total budget available during the stay, the food and beverages expenses represents up to 62.55 percent of total amount of money allocated for the trip. For souvenirs and entertainment the expenses can reach up to 54.55 percent, respectively 62.50 percent for tourists whose main objective of the visit is represented by the desire to discover new places.

On average 20.09 percent of total expenses during the stay was for the accommodation services. For this category of expenditure was found that the English are those who are spending most for accommodation with an average of 79.59 Euro, followed by Germany (54.75 Euro) and Italy (46.95 Euro), Romanian tourists spent on average 40.64 Euro, with an maxim of 150 Euro. Those from other countries spend on average 50.27 Euro for accommodation services during the stay (Table 2).

**Table 2: Accommodation expenses on tourists' category**

No.	Country	Accommodation Expenses Euro				% tourists
		Minim	Maxim	Average	Standard deviation	
1.	Romania	0	150	40,64	31,90	41,99
2.	Germany	0	400	54,75	66,49	24,27
3.	Italy	0	140	46,92	37,17	6,31
4.	UK	0	360	79,59	83,99	14,80
5.	Other countries	0	400	50,27	54,96	12,38
6.	Total	0	400	50,22	54,90	100

Assuming that the average length of stay does not affect the expenses of accommodation, coefficients were calculated to determine the existence and intensity of the link between these two variables. The results revealed that the value Sig. calculated is less than 0.001, from where it can be deduced that between the two variables is a very significant link, as it was confirmed by Hi-square test. The Hi-square calculated value (3085.97) is higher than the theoretical Hi-square (381.42), for a probability of error of 0.1% and 300 degrees of freedom, so the null hypothesis is rejected. According to the value of Pearson's contingency coefficient (0.93) between the two variables there is a strong intensity, rejecting the null hypothesis.

Food and beverages costs during the stay ranged from 0 to 350 Euro, with an average value for the entire sample of 49.47 Euro. The average cost of the catering services represents 20.65 percent of the total expenses during the stay. Out of the 412 tourists interviewed 82.28 percent (339 tourists) allocated to this category of expenses less than 100 Euro. British tourists spent most (73.11 Euro in average) for food and beverages, followed by Italians (55.77 Euro) and Germans (49.90 Euro).

From the total number of Romanian tourists 90.17 percent (156 visitors) of them spent less than 100 Euro during the stay for food and beverages. Out of the 90.17 percent, 31 tourists (19.87%) said that this category of expenditure is zero.

Form the tourists from Germany, 82 percent have spent less than 100 Euro for food, out of which 23.00% (23 tourists) have not spent money on food during the stay. Out of the 61 tourists from the United Kingdom, 61.21% (41 tourists) have spent more than 100 Euro on food and beverages, while 21.95% (9 visitors) have not registered this kind of expenditures. 76.92 percent of Italian tourists spent less than 100 Euro for food (Table 3).

**Table 3: Food and beverage expenses on tourists' category**

No.	Country	Food and beverage expenses Euro				% tourists
		Minim	Maxim	Average	Standard deviation	
1.	Romania	0	150	40.84	31.54	41.99
2.	Germany	0	350	49.90	53.72	24.27
3.	Italy	0	160	55.77	43.46	6.31
4.	UK	0	300	73.11	65.88	14.80
5.	Other countries	0	150	46.18	43.28	12.38
6.	Total	0	350	49.47	47.57	100

Another hypothesis tested was that the average length of stay that does not affect the volume of food expenditure. On the basis of Sig. coefficient was established that there is a very significant link, also confirmed by Hi-square test. The Hi-square calculated value (2170.38) is higher than the theoretical Hi-square (336.2), for a probability of error of 0.1% and 260 degrees of freedom. Pearson's contingency coefficient (0.91) reveals the existence of an intense link between the two variables. In this case the null hypothesis is rejected.

In conclusion, the average length of stay has a direct influence on the amount of money that tourists spend for basic tourist services: accommodation and catering. Increasing the average length of stay should be one of the objectives of short and medium term development strategy and promotion of the region.

### Conclusion

It was observed that the structure of the expenses highly differ from one group of tourists to another based on their origin country and the average length of stay. Almost three quarters of the respondents access accommodation and catering services, but even that only one quarter served local products (teas, gems, cheese). Having this in consideration tourism providers should take a look to the economic advantages of including in the menu such kind of products.

Knowing the amount the money that visitors from Tarnava Mare are willing to pay during their stay special offer could be prepare in order to attract more and more tourist and the supply to meet tourists' needs.

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